

Ministers Convene to Tackle Future Employment Challenges

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Dubai: At a high level conference held to mark International Labour Day, the Minister for Human Resources and Emiratization and the Minister of State for Higher Education highlighted the UAE's long term response to potential disruptions in the labour market, brought about by new technologies and economic and social changes.

Addressing the 'Future of Work' conference, H.E. Saqr Ghobash, Minister for Human Resources and Emiratization, said, "Labour markets are already changing around the world, due to increasing automation, the rise of artificial intelligence, and the impacts of globalisation.

"We are gathered together today to ensure that the UAE is able to meet the challenges head on, and take advantage of the opportunities that the fourth industrial revolution brings. Our ambition is to see a labour market that continues to provide well-paid, valued and fulfilling jobs for all, driving a diversified and competitive economy in the UAE."

H.E. Dr Ahmad bin Abdullah Humaid Belhoul Al Falasi, Minister of State for Higher Education, emphasised the importance of education and training in equipping the next generation to adapt to global forces.

"According to a recent Oxford University report, 47% of current jobs and positions in the global economy will 'disappear' in the next 20 years," he said. "Many of the jobs that our children will work in do not exist today. Education will be the most important factor in ensuring that we are equipped to meet these challenges.

"That is why the UAE has put education at the top of its list of priorities in transiting to a knowledge-based economy. Not only is 20% of the UAE's national budget dedicated to education, but the government has appointed three different Ministers focused on enhancing the quality of education."

The conference was organised in cooperation with the International Labour Organisation, and included speakers from the National Qualifications Authority, management consultant firm McKinsey, and search provider Google.

Nicolas Niemtchinow, the ILO's Assistant Director General and Special Advisor on the Future of Work, pointed out that decisions that governments and educators make about the types of skills that are taught to young people will have an important impact on their future careers.

Mr Niemtchinow said, "Digital skills for all will be fundamental, but not exclusively. Soft skills will be equally important: interpersonal skills for dealing with others, people management, innovation and creativity, all are key to mastering external communication in a permanently connected world.

"We have the largest number of young people in the workforce in history (1.8 billion). That is an opportunity because youth is more dynamic and creative. But youth is also more fragile. Our ability to take them on board and to benefit from their innovation will be, at the same time, an opportunity and a challenge."

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